NEWS RELEASE

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Navy Region Southeast Partners with Navy Personnel Command for Suicide Prevention and Awareness Training

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Navy Region Southeast Family Readiness Program

Commander, Navy Region Southeast (CNRSE) and Navy Personnel Command (NPC) conducted suicide awareness and prevention training Sept. 20-22 on board Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville.

The training included tenant command leaders, frontline supervisors, suicide prevention coordinators (SPC) and ombudsmen from installations throughout the southeast region, including NAS Pensacola, NAS Whiting Field and NAS Panama City, as well as participants from Texas, Great Lakes and Washington, D.C.

In response to an increase in military suicides, the Navy has stepped up efforts to raise awareness and enhance its suicide prevention program. Rear Adm. John C. “Jack” Scorby Jr., commander, Navy Region Southeast, signed a proclamation in September supporting those efforts.

“In the Navy community, no Sailor stands alone,” Scorby said. “It is the responsibility of leadership to ensure programs are in place and Sailors have ready access to them.”

NAS Pensacola Command Master Chief (SW/AW) Michael F. Dollen opened the training by welcoming attendees to the command leadership suicide prevention brief, which provided guidance on Navy Suicide Prevention Program (NSPP) instruction (OPNAVINST 1720.4A) and outlined the role and responsibilities of commanding officers in suicide

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prevention.

According to NSPP instruction, all Navy commands are required to designate in writing a command SPC, preferably E-7 or above. The SPC is responsible to ensure the command establishes and maintains a comprehensive suicide prevention program in accordance with OPNAV N135F instruction.

During a four-hour workshop, frontline supervisors were provided in-depth training to enhance their ability to recognize and effectively intervene with personnel suffering from psychological distress as a result of a variety of life problems.

“Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care”, said Steven Holton, NPC suicide prevention outreach coordinator. “Deck-plate supervisors are vital to helping Sailors in distress because they spend time every day at work with their people. Good leadership is good prevention.”

The training for supervisors included group exercises to get participants thinking about the subtle, day-to-day interactions they have with Sailors, which can create an atmosphere of trust and open communication.

“Sailors need to know you and trust you before they will allow you to help them during times of crisis,” said Cmdr. Linda Beede, NPC behavioral health suicide prevention outreach coordinator. “Sailors will not trust you with their problems if you don’t take the time to get to know them.”

It is easier to recognize distress when supervisors know how someone acts when things are normal. Building good working relationships is key to suicide prevention and helping personnel cope with life stressors, Beede said.

“Research shows that stress can negatively impact job performance and that troubled Sailors are less efficient and productive at work and are absent from work more often”, Holton said. “They are also more likely to be late, miss deadlines, make faulty decisions and mistakes, and to experience more accidents. Distressed personnel also exhibit lower morale and have more arguments with supervisors, co-workers, friends and family members. All these factors disrupt

unit functioning and cohesiveness. The impact of distress amongst Sailors can result in the overall lowering of both individual and unit readiness"

During all training sessions, Chief Parachute Rigger Jeremy Kelsey (AW/SW) shared his personal story of psychological pain, which ultimately resulted in him attempting suicide after facing ongoing depression and not reaching out for help when he needed it. Kelsey said it was not until he reached out and asked for help that he received the appropriate treatment he needed to successfully resolve his problems, allowing him to continue to serve and have a successful Navy career.

During the week, suicide awareness and prevention training was also provided for installation and command SPCs and ombudsmen. In out-brief sessions, participants indicated they were better prepared to recognize and assist individuals in distress as a direct result of the training received.

"As leaders, it's important to reach out and help our Sailors," said Chief Aviation Maintenance Administrationman (AW/SW) Eugene Burns, CNRSE regional suicide prevention coordinator. "The ultimate goal of the suicide awareness and prevention training is to make command leadership and other support personnel aware of Navy resources and prevention tools that are available to help them with this critical issue."

In fiscal year 2012, CNRSE, in partnership with NPC, will continue its efforts to promote the NSPP throughout the southeast region.

In today's military community it takes courage to step up and ask for help. Remember, ACT- Ask, Care, Treat. It is an honorable thing to do.

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (Sept. 22, 2011) -- Steven Holton, Naval Personnel Command suicide prevention outreach coordinator, speaks during suicide prevention and awareness training on board Naval Air Station Jacksonville. (U.S. Navy photo by Dianne Parker/Released)